

70,000 Area Phone Calls Were Tapped in '70

INQUIRER - 5/18/71

By WILLIAM VANCE

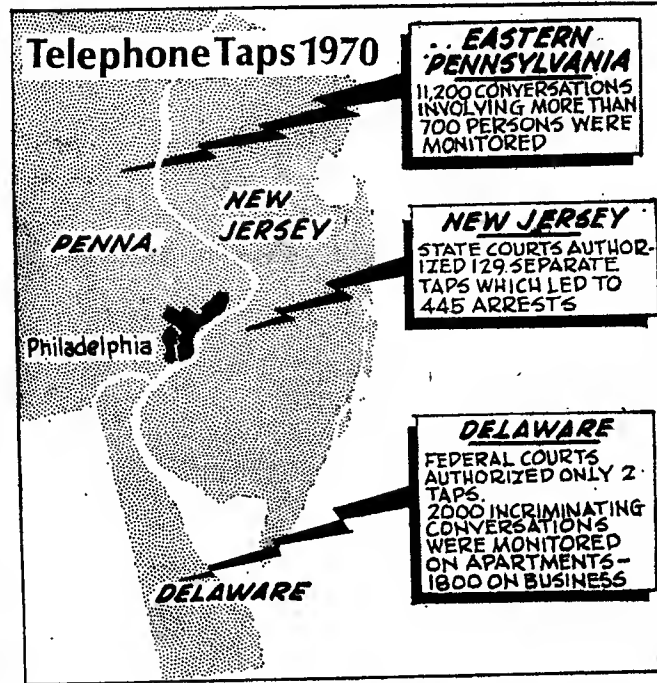
Of Our Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON.—More than 70,000 telephone conversations in the Greater Philadelphia area were tapped by Federal and state authorities with court approval last year, leading to 610 arrests, mostly on gambling and narcotics charges.

This was revealed Tuesday in a report to Congress by the administrative office of the U. S. Courts which showed that the number of court orders approving electronic surveillance throughout the nation rose from 304 in 1969 to 597 last year.

The bugging of the 70,000 telephone calls in New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware involved 177 separate taps of telephone lines at a cost to taxpayers of more than a half million dollars.

The 610 arrests represented about one-third of all criminal arrests related to the sharply



Inquirer Map by WILLIAM STRECKFUSS

increased use of court-approved wiretap authority throughout the country in 1970. None of the taps in the three-state region had resulted in a conviction before the report was completed. Convictions based on 1970 wiretaps likely would show up in the next annual report.

In Eastern Pennsylvania, taps authorized by Federal courts led to 88 arrests, all but 20 of them related to gambling charges.

New Jersey, one of 18 states with wiretap statutes, accounted for almost one-third of all the bugging done in the United States last year, the bulk of it in Mercer County around Trenton.

State courts in New Jersey authorized 129 separate taps which led to 445 arrests. Federal authorities planted an additional 25 taps which resulted in 77 arrests in New Jersey and contributed to nine others in Pennsylvania.

Of the more than \$507,000 spent in wiretaps in New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware, nearly \$145,000 was invested in unproductive efforts which resulted in no arrests.

In one instance last May, Continued on Page 7, Column 4

New Jersey state authorities tapped a residential telephone in Mercer County on suspicion of larceny and receipt and sale of stolen property. Thirty days and 227 telephone calls later, authorities gave up with no arrests after an investment of \$20,620.

BUSINESS PHONE

In Delaware, Federal court authorized only two taps. They involved an apartment phone and a business phone last December on suspicion of gambling violations. But no arrests were made although more than 2000 incriminating conversations were monitored on the apartment tap and 1800 on the business phone.

The report did not identify individuals, addresses or specific taps. In states where taps are authorized only by Federal courts, such as Pennsylvania and Delaware, locations were identified only by districts.

In the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, which includes Philadelphia, 21 taps were used from three days to three weeks each on apartment, home and business phones. A total of 11,200 conversations involving more than 700 persons were monitored. COST \$112,504

More than 7000 of the conversations were deemed "incriminating" and resulted in 88 arrests. The surveillance cost \$112,504.

New Jersey authorities planted 82 taps in Mercer County alone, the nation's busiest place for bugging. The taps ranged from three to 41 days each. Investigators listened to more than 22,000 conversations involving some 3000 persons. About 18,000 conversations were deemed "incriminating" and resulted in 283

arrests, mostly on bookmaking and lottery charges.

The Mercer County surveillance cost nearly \$170,000.

SEPARATE TAPS

Camden county reports were incomplete although the record shows four lottery arrests and one murder arrest based on four separate taps. Federal authorities tapped 25 telephones at undisclosed locations in New Jersey, monitoring more than 22,000 calls involving 1800 individuals and arresting 77. The cost was more than \$155,000.